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UNCLAS AMMAN 001390

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SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [JO](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: JORDANIANS PROTEST SEPARATION BARRIER

REF: AMMAN 01260

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1. (SBU) Jordanians staged small and largely peaceful demonstrations in Amman on February 21 and 23 protesting Israel's construction of the security barrier in the West Bank. RSO contacts estimate that approximately 300 people attended a two-hour candlelight vigil in Amman during the evening of February 21.

2. (U) Timed to coincide with the opening of the International Court of Justice proceedings in the Hague to discuss the barrier, approximately 200 Jordanians on February 23 staged a sit-in at the United Nations office in Amman amid heavy security. The organizer of the protest, the Higher Committee of the Jordanian National Opposition Political Parties (among them Islamists and Communists) presented the head of the UN mission in Amman a petition addressed to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan condemning the barrier,

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according to press reports.

3. (U) "We call on the ICJ in the Hague to show that this barrier is an apartheid wall and constitutes a danger to peace in the region as well as to the Palestinian people and Jordan," the petition stated. Organizers also condemned in their statement Sharon's warning to Jordan for its anti-barrier position. "We condemn the terrorist Sharon's threats to Jordan for its positive and effective stand against the wall."

4. (SBU) Jordanian contacts of Palestinian origin say they are generally pleased with the GOJ's outspoken statements condemning the barrier and appreciate its advocacy on the issue (ref). They note that the GOJ, which has appointed its ambassador to the UN, Prince Zeid Raad, to lead Jordan's delegation to the ICJ proceedings, has a strong security interest in advocating against the barrier. Former Senator Husni Ayesb told PolOff that the wall is an effort to place Palestinians in a "ghetto-like" living situation that presents a humanitarian crisis that the international community cannot accept. Another Palestinian contact Engineer Hani Abu Hijleh added that the Jordanian government's strong and public condemnation of the wall and its diplomatic efforts are appreciated by Palestinians. He said that Jordanians will be following the proceedings carefully and, depending on developments, did not rule out more public protests.

COMMENT

5. (SBU) While further displays of public anger at the separate barrier are possible, we assume that they will be relatively small and peaceful.

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